

Sequoyah, Smokies, Songs, & Summitt: Creating, Implementing, & Evaluating the Tennessee Junior 4-H Camp Curriculum

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to create, implement, and evaluate an interdisciplinary curriculum for Junior 4-H Camp at the University of Tennessee Extension Clyde Austin 4-H Center in Greeneville, Tennessee. Four lessons were developed using research-based practices in experiential learning and instructional design, including the Richards Working Model of Curriculum Development and Robert Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction.

During the summer camping season of 2017, 1,184 students learned about Tennessee history and life skills while developing their skills in art, music, science, math, and language arts at 4-H camp. Campers in grades 4-6 learned about Sequoyah's invention of the Cherokee syllabary, endangered species in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pat Summitt's leadership as the head coach of the Tennessee Lady Volunteers Basketball team, and the history reflected in the state songs of Tennessee.

Responses from camper evaluations indicated that 54% of the sampled population learned from the curriculum, and evaluations from volunteer leaders and 4-H agents showed frustration with various aspects of the educational sessions. This feedback and practitioner reflections guide future recommendations for future curricula.

Background

Tennessee 4-H Youth Development provides programming throughout the state under the guidance of UT Extension. Junior 4-H Camp is one of the many opportunities that 4-H offers students in grades 4-6. This is a week-long, overnight camp where youth experience a wide range of outdoor recreational activities such as swimming, woodworking, and canoeing.

Context

Each week at camp, volunteer leaders teach campers educational sessions called "project boxes." The campers are divided into four groups of approximately 80 students, and each session lasts 45 minutes. The camp program director and program assistant develop the project box curriculum around a different theme each summer. The 2017 summer camp theme was Tennessee Heritage. They provide support to the leaders who teach it, but they do not directly instruct campers.



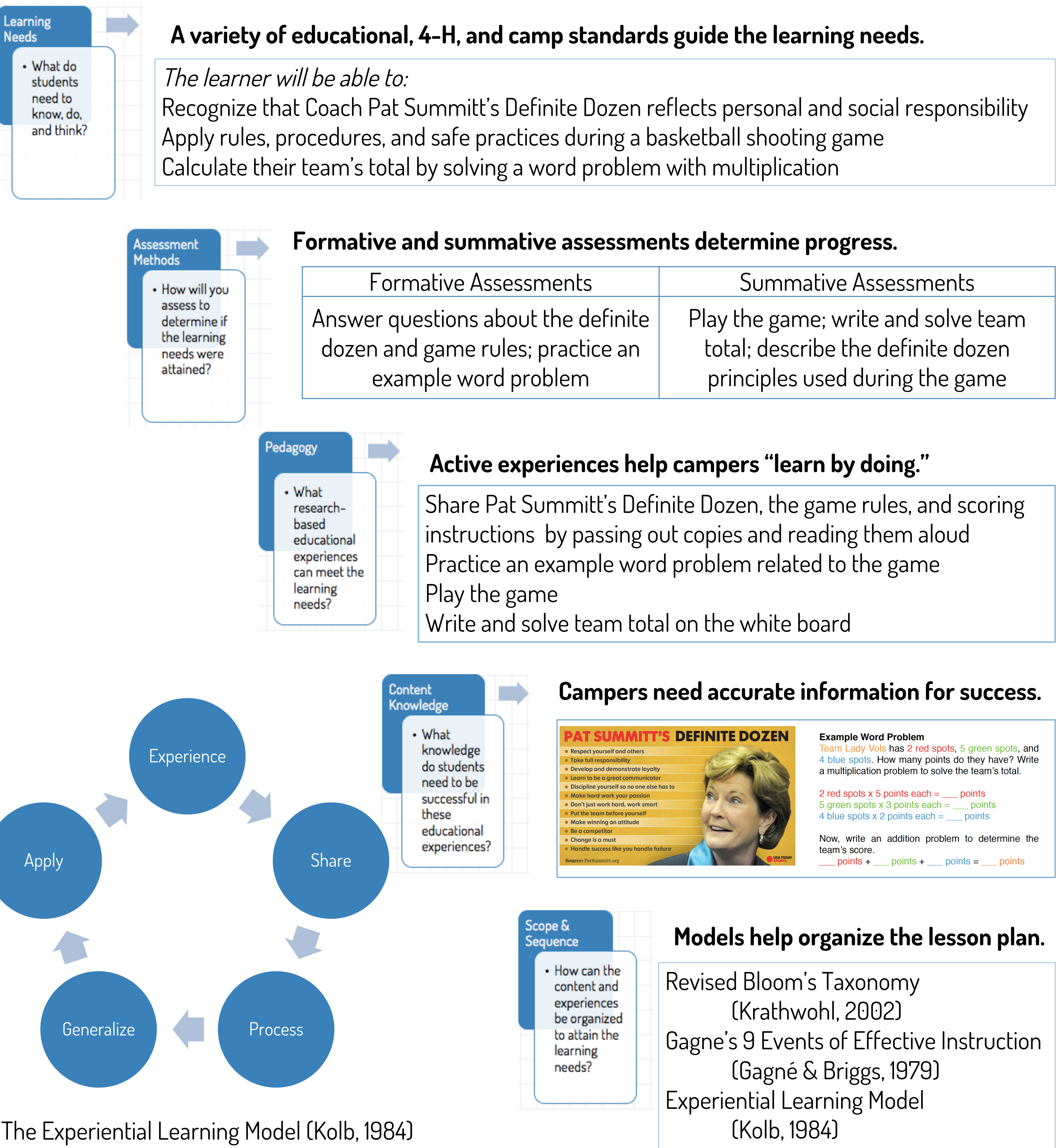
Campers during the *Pat Summitt's Sports Legacy* project box.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to create, implement, and evaluate educational programming for Junior 4-H Camp at the Clyde Austin 4-H Center using research-based practices in youth development and instructional design.

Methods

The curriculum was created using the Working Model of Curriculum Development (Richards, 2016). The following section describes this model and includes examples from the lesson *Pat Summitt's Sports Legacy*. A full copy of this lesson is available at tiny.utk.edu/SummittLesson for your reference.



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Sources

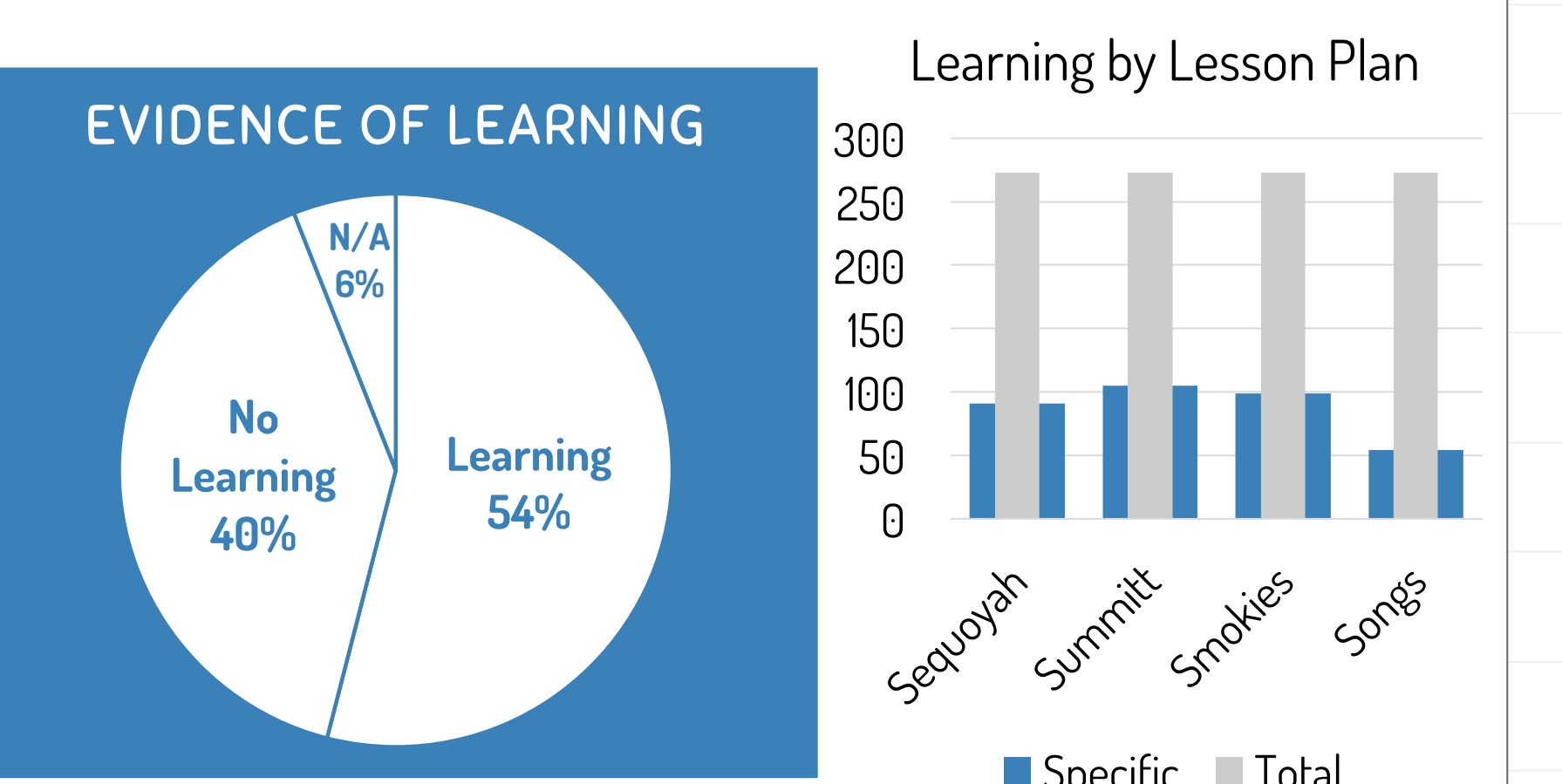
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- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival and Unsplash

Analysis

Camp evaluation questions are determined each summer by the statewide camping curriculum team. Evaluations were distributed to campers and leaders on the last day of each week of camp. The evaluation asked campers what they learned during the project boxes. A total of 505 campers completed evaluations. These open-ended responses were hand coded using Excel to assign color labels to each camper's response. To be classified as learning, the camper's response had to describe a relevant piece of knowledge more detailed than simply "Sequoyah" or "about stuff." Each of the "learning" responses were then broken into subcategories by individual lesson. Some campers wrote responses that indicated learning in all lessons, while others only cited evidence for one lesson. The evaluation asked leaders to classify the curriculum as excellent, good, average, poor, or terrible and to provide comments about the project boxes. A total of 204 leaders responded to the evaluation. The responses in the comment box were hand coded based on the major topics.

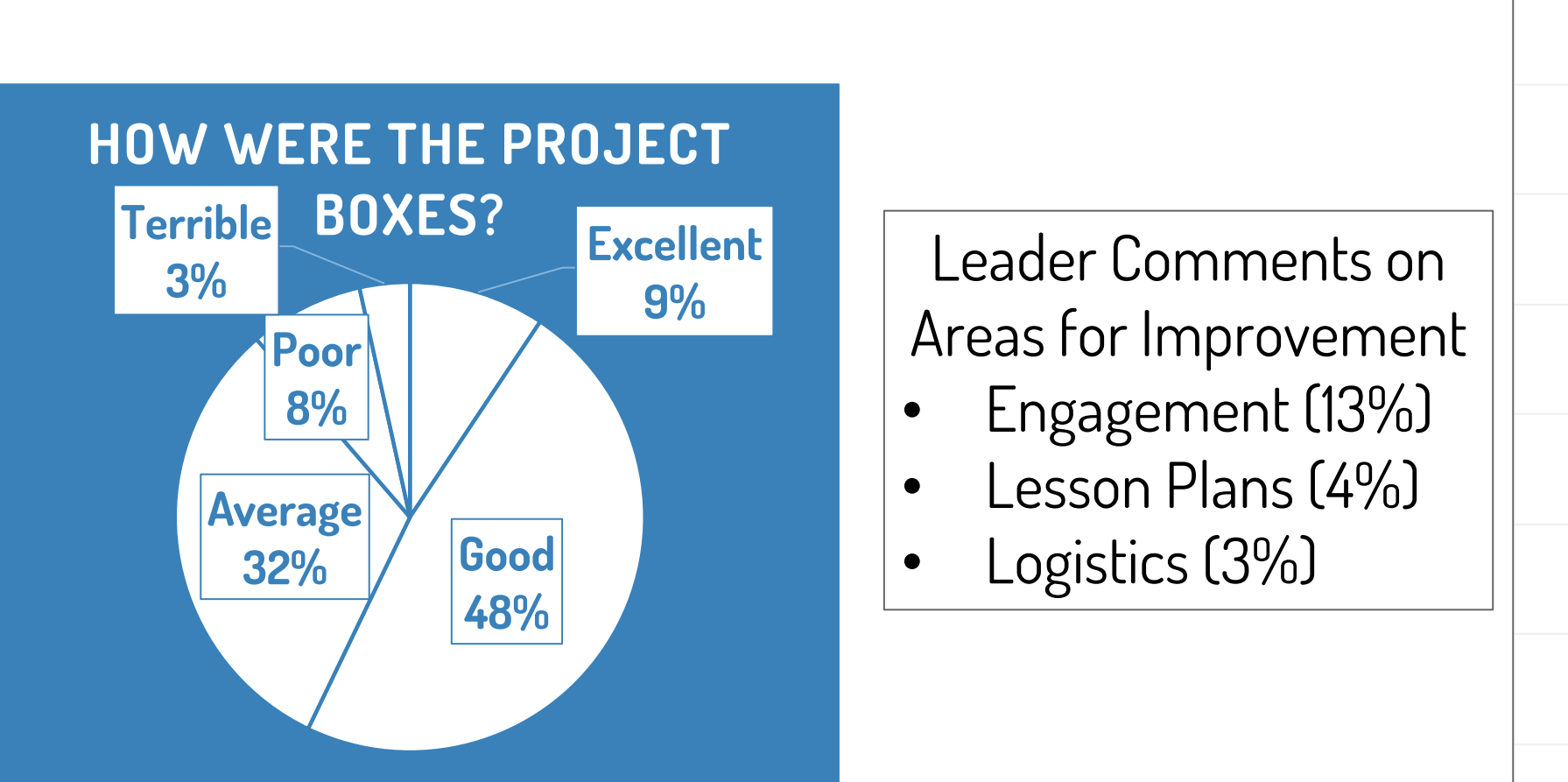
Results

Campers



Camper responses indicated that they learned the most from the lessons on Sequoyah, Summitt, and Smokies.

Leaders



Most leaders reported that the project boxes were good or average, but they want the curriculum to be more engaging and organized.

Reflections

- Evidence-based practices add value to programming
- Campers learn more when they are actively engaged
- Leaders need additional training before teaching

Recommendations

- Present in the Tennessee 4-H Lesson Plan Template
- Create training videos for leaders to watch before camp
- Apply project-based learning strategies (Krathwohl, 2002)